

Appeal Decision Notice

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Decision by Dan Jackman, a Reporter appointed by the Scottish Ministers

- Listed building consent appeal reference: LBA-390-2002
- Site address: Dunblane railway station, Station Road, Dunblane, FK15 9EP
- Appeal by Network Rail against the decision by Stirling Council
- Application for listed building consent 13/00485/LBC dated 26 July 2013 refused by notice dated 12 December 2013
- The works proposed: Removal of footbridge
- Application drawings are listed in schedule 2 at the end of this notice
- Date of site visit by Reporter: 14 April 2014

Date of appeal decision: 21 May 2014

Decision

I allow the appeal and grant listed building consent subject to the three conditions set out in schedule 1 at the end of this notice. Attention is also drawn to the advisory note at the end of this notice.

Reasoning

1. The determining issues in this appeal are whether the proposal would preserve the building and features of special architectural or historic interest and the character and appearance of the conservation area, bearing in mind the provisions of section 14(2) and 64(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, the provisions of the development plan and the Scottish Minister's policies regarding the historic environment.
2. The policies of the development plan and those of the Scottish Ministers that I have been referred to have the same aim as the legislative duties set out above. The aim is to make sure that the architectural and historic character of a listed building is not eroded. However, this does not mean that no change can occur. Instead, any change needs to be considered carefully and the strategy for intervention should be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the building.
3. Dunblane railway station is a category C listed building. The footbridge is included in the listed description and is described as a, "*segmentally-arched, covered, lattice plate*



girder footbridge, decorative gothic brackets to cast-iron piers.” Although the footbridge is not original with the station building it is nevertheless a historic structure that has been in place for over 100 years. I consider that the footbridge is an ancillary structure, which is an important component of the architectural and historic character of the station.

4. The railway line forms the western boundary of the Dunblane Conservation Area. I agree that the station building is important to the character and appearance of the conservation area. However, I do not consider that the footbridge itself makes any appreciable contribution. This is because the station building obscures many views of the footbridge. If the new footbridge is constructed, views would be obscured from the south. I note that the proposal would result in no changes to the main station building. I therefore conclude that the removal of the footbridge would have a negligible impact on the character and appearance of Dunblane Conservation Area.

5. Change to Dunblane railway station is inevitable irrespective of the decision on this appeal. This is because planning permission has been granted on 12 December 2013 for a new footbridge as part of a Scottish wide programme to improve access for people with disabilities and because Dunblane is included in the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme for electrification.

6. Network Rail submitted the planning application for the new footbridge at the same time as the listed building consent for the removal of the original footbridge. Network Rail therefore did not design the new footbridge to coexist with the original. In granting planning permission for the removal of the steel footbridge and its replacement with the new footbridge the council were obviously satisfied with the impact of the new footbridge upon the listed station building and conservation area. There are therefore two competing conservation strategies. Either remove the original footbridge to a preserved railway leaving only the new footbridge (as advocated by Network Rail) or retain the original footbridge alongside the new footbridge (as advocated by the council and Historic Scotland).

7. I consider that retaining two footbridges of such contrasting styles in such close proximity to each other is neither historically nor architecturally authentic. It would be most unusual for such a small station. I fear that retaining both the original and new footbridges would result in a visually inappropriate compromise that would be unable to be understood by users without knowledge of the surrounding circumstances. I agree with the representation from Dunblane Community Council that both footbridges together results in a cluttered appearance, which in my opinion, is detrimental to the overall architectural character of the railway station.

8. In addition, further adaptations to the original footbridge would be inevitable with electrification. Sleeves would be required to provide insulation. The iron lattice structure would have to be enclosed. The internal width, already narrow, may have to be reduced still further, depending on the chosen solution. These changes would compromise the architectural and historic interest of the original footbridge, which has already been altered with modern lighting and wire ducting.

9. I agree with the council that increased maintenance costs for Network Rail are not of themselves sufficient justification for the removal of an ancillary listed structure. Nonetheless, the fact remains that resources would have to be used to maintain a significantly altered structure that was not operationally necessary and functionally deficient in a number of respects.

10. I am also not persuaded that the new Technical Specification for Interoperability issued by the European Union is particularly relevant. Any necessary increases in height clearances must impact on very many structures across the entire railway system. However, it does illustrate the tensions that exist between maintaining structures designed over 100 years ago and the operational needs of a modern railway system.

11. I am aware that Dunblane railway station has had two footbridges for sometime. I am familiar with the previous steel footbridge (although removed at the time of my site visit) and have seen photographs as part of the appeal submissions. However, in my opinion, the steel footbridge was also visually unfortunate. I agree with the criticisms of it included in the Dunblane Conservation Area Appraisal (see pages 55 and 62). I consider that the removal of the previous steel footbridge has improved the architectural character of the station and the wider conservation area.

12. Another important difference is that the steel footbridge was a visually 'light' structure with the upper flight of steps facing away from the original footbridge before returning. The new footbridge, due to the three lift towers, is in my opinion, a much 'heavier' structure and has steps facing the original footbridge and ending close to it. I consider that the cluttered appearance of two footbridges would be far more obvious with the original and new bridge than was the case with the original and previous steel bridge.

13. On the other hand, removal of the original footbridge would result in a single footbridge once the new bridge was constructed. This would address the uncomfortable juxtaposition I have previously identified. In my opinion, a single footbridge would be more in keeping with the overall architectural character of the railway station than two with such contrasting styles so close together.

14. The new footbridge would be read as a modern ancillary structure with an obvious practical function. I do not consider this would be detrimental to the architectural and historic character of the overall station or Dunblane Conservation Area. It would also mean that platform spacing distances would comply with current standards, which I consider has added safety benefits for passengers.

15. The original footbridge, if relocated, whilst lost to Dunblane, would not be lost as a historical asset. It is not unprecedented for ancillary railway structures to be relocated to preserved railway lines. At a preserved railway, although in a different spatial context, it is more likely to be able to be renovated and maintained in an architecturally and historically authentic manner. The footbridge would not be subject to the same pressures for operationally necessary adaptations that are likely to occur if the footbridge is part of the main railway system soon to be electrified.

16. However, for the relocation to be a material factor in the decision there has to be a realistic prospect of sufficient commitment and resources for the footbridge to be renovated and maintained. I am encouraged by the letter dated 11 June 2013 from the Chairman of Caledonian Railway (Breachin) Ltd. However, it is only an indication of support. Therefore, whilst I agree with Network Rail's suggested conditions for a method statement and a full record survey, I also consider that it is necessary for a scheme to be submitted for approval by the council, setting out the detailed arrangements for the renovation and maintenance of the footbridge at the preserved railway.

17. Subject to the above conditions, I consider that on balance, the relocation of the original footbridge to a preserved railway is a superior conservation strategy. In my view it would better preserve the architecture and historic character of the listed railway station and ancillary structure than maintaining two footbridges. I therefore consider that Network Rail's proposal is the most appropriate intervention in the particular circumstances of Dunblane railway station. In my judgement, it would best support the aims of the legislation, Scottish Government policy and the objectives of the development plan. I have considered all other matters raised but none is sufficient to alter my conclusions set out above.

Dan Jackman

Reporter

Schedule 1: List of conditions

1. Prior to dismantling the footbridge a method statement detailing removal, storage, transport and reconstruction shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. Upon approval the works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To make sure that the removal and relocation of the footbridge is carried out in a satisfactory manner and does not harm the station building or footbridge

2. The footbridge shall not be removed until a scheme has been submitted and approved in writing by the Planning Authority demonstrating that the footbridge in the new location would be renovated, maintained and seen by the general public. Upon approval the scheme shall be implemented unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To make sure there is a realistic prospect that the footbridge is renovated and maintained as a historical asset.

3. Prior to dismantling the footbridge opportunity will be provided to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland to carry out a full record survey of the structure.

Reason: To make sure opportunity is given for a detailed record of the footbridge to be made.

Schedule 2: Application drawings

Location plan

Block plan (drawing number 13028-IDP-DRG-DBL-017/P01)

Detailed plan as existing (drawing number 13028-IDP-DRG-DBL-012/P01)

Detailed elevations as existing (drawing number 13028-IDP-DRG-DBL-013/P01)

Detailed plans and elevations as proposed (drawing number 13028-IDP-DRG-DBL-014/P01)

Site plan and views as proposed (drawing number 13028-IDP-DRG-DBL-015/P01)

Elevations as proposed for information (drawing number 13028-IDP-DRG-DBL-016/P01)

Advisory note

The length of the consent: This listed building consent will last only for three years from the date of this decision notice, unless the works have been started within that period. (See section 16 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).)